

ELIJAH'S WORK BEFORE ASCENSION

– *SEPTEMBER 19. – 1 KINGS 20:1-21. –*

DEFEATS THROUGH DRUNKENNESS – SYRIA'S KING WARS WITH ISRAEL – ISRAEL'S CAPITAL IN DANGER – KING BENHADAD CONFIDENT OF VICTORY – HE CELEBRATES IT IN ADVANCE IN DRUNKEN ORGIES – ISRAEL'S SMALL ARMY UNDER DIVINE COMMAND DEFEATS THE SYRIANS WITH TERRIBLE SLAUGHTER – MODERN WAR'S CONTRAST – WHY GOD PERMITS WARS, CALAMITIES, SICKNESS, INSANITY, ETC. – WHEN WARS WILL CEASE – SHOULD CHRISTIANS ENGAGE IN WAR?

OUR lesson recounts the attack of the Syrians upon the Israelites, whose capital city, Samaria, is besieged and its king in fear of the necessity of capitulation. The Syrian king boastfully tells what he will do and commands a surrender. King Ahab, perplexed, considers resistance useless, until the Lord's message revives his courage, directing him how to proceed with the battle. Following this direction a great victory for the Israelites was gained – this partly because the Syrian king, Ben-Hadad, was very drunk, and many of his lords with him. They were thus incapacitated from using the vital strength of their large army, and suffered great defeat.

All the wars of the past, however, pale into insignificance before the present great struggle progressing in Europe. One of the British lords, addressing workmen recently and urging efficiency in the manufacture of war munitions, declared that the British had expended for ammunition in Belgium recently more money than during the entire Boer War. The rapidity with which modern guns are fired and the terrible slaughter which they

accomplish are appalling. Authentic reports declare that twelve millions of the picked men of Europe have already been either killed, wounded or made prisoners; and we may safely assume that the armies now contending number ten millions.

When we consider that one man, armed with a rapid-fire [R5760 : page 266] gun, is more than an equivalent of twenty men, yea, than of a hundred men as in former wars, we get some conception of what a terrible war the present one is. The Scriptures seem to declare that it will bring no great victory to any of the contestants, but that eventually all the nations thus engaged will be terribly weakened, not only in the loss of their most able manhood, but also financially impoverished and embarrassed to the extent that their bonds will probably never be paid.

LESSON TAUGHT BY THE WAR

It is a sad reflection upon the boasted civilization of our day that such a war should be considered the only way by which the great nations of the world could come to an agreement on matters of mutual interest in respect to an earth which God has given to the children of men as their common heritage. When we consider that the nations at war are claiming to be Christian nations, the thought is all the more horrible. Our only comfort is in the thought that the poor deluded people do not understand the meaning of the term Christian, and that the great mass of them never were Christians. True Christians, saints, no doubt are to be found in all the armies of the countries where conscription is the law. Bible students from the different armies from time to time give us word of their welfare and of their endeavor to hold up the Light and to show forth the Lord's praises, even under such terrible conditions.

Surely the people of the world are beginning to awaken to a realization of the fact that the boasted four hundred millions of Christians are, for the most part, as far from God and from Christian ideals as are the twelve hundred millions of heathens.

Their awakening should help them to realize what the true Church is, and that her mission is not to convert the world but to prepare herself to be Messiah's Kingdom class, the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, Messiah's Joint-heir in His Heavenly Kingdom. If the war should teach this lesson to any considerable number, it will not have been in vain. And if these saints of God, learning the way more perfectly, shall carry out a full consecration of themselves to the Lord, and thus make their calling and election sure to a place in the Kingdom, they will have a share in the First Resurrection to spiritual conditions. Then, associated with their Redeemer, they will bless the world of mankind on the human plane, uplifting the willing and obedient to human perfection.

WHY GOD PERMITS WAR

Many are inquiring, Why does God permit war – yea, why do the Scriptures imply that God brings about wars? We reply that it makes little difference to the person dying whether his death comes as a result of a bayonet wound, a sword wound or a bullet wound, or whether it comes from consumption, pneumonia, smallpox or general constitutional breakdown. And if it makes little difference to the individual, we may say that it makes less difference to the Almighty. God's penalty upon our race is a death penalty – come how it may. For six thousand years the penalty has been in operation; and the entire race is going down to the tomb under that sentence, "Dying, thou shalt die."

The hope for all, then, is in Christ and through His death – by the resurrection of the dead which He will accomplish during the Millennium. His faithful Church, His Bride, who is to share with Him in the Kingdom, will be the first resurrected, and then to a plane of glory, honor and immortality. The remainder of the world will come forth, "every man in his own order," as the Bible declares. They will come forth that they may learn of the Goodness of God, the Wisdom of God, the Power of God, the

Love of God, and be enabled to contrast these with what they learned in their previous lifetime under [R5760 : page 267] the reign of Sin and Death. Meantime, the Bible declares, from the Divine viewpoint the whole world of mankind are falling asleep in death, to await the awakening of Messiah's Kingdom and the beginning then of the grand opportunity which He has secured for all, whereby they may escape from sin and, ultimately, from death.

"THERE SHALL BE NO MORE CURSE"

The Divine promise and provision is that under Messiah's Kingdom wars will be made to cease forever, and all other calamities will cease. Instead of mankind's going down into the tomb, the reverse order will be established – the resurrection of the dead. Instead of sickness, disease and insanity will come healing, strength, restitution. (Acts 3:19-21.) Speaking of the effect of His Millennial Kingdom, Jesus declares that the curse will be rolled away and God's blessing will come on instead, until there shall be no more sighing or dying or crying or pain. All these blessings are as yet only promises, and hence only for the Church to rejoice in or understand – and they according to their degree of faith in God and of understanding of His Word.

The Bible informs us that after Messiah's spiritual Kingdom shall have taken charge of the world's affairs, nothing will be permitted to hurt or destroy in all God's glorious Kingdom. This will mean that a spiritual police force will have humanity under absolute control. Every misdeed will be punished as soon as it is determined upon and before it shall have been put into effect. Likewise, every good act, good word and good thought will bring a blessing of restitution, health, strength – mental, moral, physical. Under such conditions the world will very speedily learn to differentiate right from wrong. They will speedily learn of the change of dispensation, and that thenceforth every sinful thought, word and act will be sure to receive punishment, while every good

thought, good word and good act will be sure to receive a blessing. The Bible tells of this condition of things, saying, "When Thy judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." – Isaiah 11:9; 26:9; 28:17.

CHRISTIANS ENGAGING IN WAR

Many are perplexed to understand the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles in respect to war, when they contrast these with the Lord's directions to the Jews and His blessing of their wars. This matter can be understood only from the one viewpoint – the Bible viewpoint.

The first invitation to fallen men to become sons of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord, dates from the time of Jesus, and particularly from the time that He died for our sins, arose from the dead, ascended to Heaven to appear in the presence of God on our behalf, and as a result of that work shed forth on the waiting disciples the Holy Spirit of God and the begetting power to a new nature. None prior to that had ever been sons of God from the time that Adam sinned. At very most Moses was a servant and Abraham a friend. St. John assures us that the liberty or privilege to become sons of God came through our Lord Jesus at His First Advent to those who fully accepted Him. – John 1:12,13.

These sons of God, otherwise the Body of Christ, otherwise the Bride of Christ, are not of the world, but chosen and separated from the world by the Divine call and spirit-begetting. To these Jesus said, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "I have chosen you [out of the world], and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." (John 17:14; 15:16,8.) Now the fruits of the Spirit, the Apostle tells us, are manifest – meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly-kindness, love. These things being in us and abounding in good measure will make us that we

shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that we shall have an abundant entrance ministered unto us into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for which we pray, "Thy Kingdom come," and which we are to enter by resurrection change, in due time. – Galatians 5:22,23; 2 Peter 1:5-11.

SCRIPTURES MISAPPLIED

Does God give special direction to this class of His spirit-begotten children in respect to war, or are they in this matter subject to the powers that be? We reply that all the Lord's people are soldiers of the Cross, and that the Apostle has forewarned us that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. (2 Corinthians 10:4.) There is no commission anywhere in the Bible for God's consecrated people to war, to fight, to kill, to take from others either life or property. The present great war is merely a demonstration of the fact that if any considerable number of those participating in it ever were Christians, they have been merely babes in Christ and did not understand the teachings of the Lord.

Nevertheless, we perceive that in all the warring countries the professed ministers of Christ are acting as recruiting agents. All kinds of arguments are used to persuade the young men of the country, contrary to the teachings of the Master. The same men who are accustomed to laugh at the declaration that the Turkish soldiers in former wars were promised, in event of death, a sure passport to Heavenly Paradise – these same ministers are now urging all the eligible with whom they have influence to prepare to go to battle to lay down their lives. While the Germans have put upon their soldiers' belts, "God with us," the British ministers are quoting Bible texts to encourage enlistment of their young men and to throw a halo of glory upon the soldier dead.

"YET WILL I REJOICE IN THE LORD!"

Though the fig-tree shall not blossom,
Though the olive's labour fail,
Though a murrain, sore and grievous,
Smite the herd on hill and dale, –
Yet my soul shall bless and praise Him,
And my faith shall still prevail!

Though the earth be filled with violence,
And the Dove of Peace hath fled,
While the land and sea are groaning
'Neath the burden of their dead, –
Yet, amid the awful tumult,
I rejoice and lift my head!

Though the vision seem to tarry,
And the waiting time prolong,
Though my faith be strangely tested
In the conflict fierce and strong,
Yet *His Grace* shall be sufficient,
And the burden of my song!

Though He slay me, I will trust Him,
Though my very heart He break,
For I know with loving wisdom
He hath planned the way I take. –
Thus my dying breath shall bless Him,
And I'll praise Him when I wake!

– G. W. SEIBERT.

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